No. 118

LETTER

TO A

FRIEND

IN THE

COUNTRY.

—*procacior* ANSER. OVID.

LONDON:

Printed for T. Cooper at the *Globe* in *Pater-noster Row*.

M.DCC.XL.

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A LETTER TO A FRIEND IN THE COUNTRY.

THAT all is Vanity below,
More than two thousand Years ago
A King affirm'd—and SOLOMON remarks,
Kings in those Days were learned Clerks.
That human Projects are in vain,
The foll'wing Story will explain.

For tho' I may not have the Wit
To comment, what the Sage hath writ;
Yet, to illuſtrate what he taught,
Proper Examples may be brought.
This Introduction to a Song,
Perhaps you'll fancy, is too long:
And that Reflexions trite and ſtale
Muſt needs produce a ſorry Tale.
But all hard Thoughts a while ſuſpend,
Till you have read me to the end.
For what ſays WHITEFIELD? 'Tis a Sin--
" Again? why! will you ne'er begin?
(Methinks you interrupt me here)
" Thus you may prate on for a Year.
" But find me out a Rhetorician,
" A Caſuiſt, Lawyer, or Logician
" To prove, a Work will e'er be done,
" Which never is to be begun.

I then reply --- Great Fault you find:
My Fable read, you'll change your Mind.
I'm ſlow, but ſure of all I ſay:
And we old Folks muſt have our way.
Your learned Men are plodding Fools,
And form no Problems by my Rules.
For I, in Politicks well read,
Can, if they're wanted, wake the dead;
And prove to *Britons* meek and pliant,
That ev'ry Wind-mill is a Giant.
Doubt you, if Science ſo profound
Leſs arduous Matters may expound?
Or fail to ſhew what I pretend,
That things, which ne'er begin, may end?
Or, that I may (as *Hebrew* Speeches,
And as the Pray'rs of modern Witches
Are backwards read) be underſtood,
Tho' you begin where I conclude?

Thus

Thus, to untwiſt a Skain of Thread,
Hath puzzled many a Female Head;
Caus'd a meek Houſe-wife make a pother,
In finding out one End, or t'other.
(And here I think the Matter's plain,
There's no Beginning to the Skain:
But for that Want it makes amends,
Since the ſame Thing affords two Ends.)
Come either firſt, or laſt; all's one:
The Dame is pleas'd: the Work is done.

To carry my Aſſertion higher;
Do you not ſmile, and much admire,
That quaint Diſcourſes ſhould prevail,
Tho' they have neither Head nor Tail?
(By this we ſurely muſt intend
Strange Things, which ne'er begin nor end)
Or, ſince they cannot be perceiv'd
By mortal Eyes, are ſo believ'd.

Thus,

Thus, if my Simile may please,
Observe the Maggots in a Cheese:
Emblems of those, which oft are bred
In an un-sound, un-finish'd Head.
If *Scarlet does not help your Eyes,
You can't discern their Shape and Size,
And how they labour, fight, and breed;
Or at which end the Insects feed.
But you must have a wretched Taste,
To praise the Ordure they have cast.
Such are the Hymns, which Prudes compose:
Such is the tuneful Hall-Book
Such are the Songs, which Eunuchs sing:
Such the wise Sayings * * * *
Or Pilgrim's Visions on the Road:
Or the great Laureat's Birth-day Ode:
Or Panegyricks on the Dead,
By Daily Advertisers spread;

Or

* A famous Opitician.

Or, for the Folk of better Sort,
By the trim Chaplains of the Court.

By this Digreſſion is explain'd
The Thing, which I at firſt maintain'd.
But, to leave Room for no Objection,
Do but obſerve one ſubſequent Direction;
And, tho' you think me grown prolix,
Yet my Dimenſions you may fix.

If you are ask'd, to read me o'er;
Paſs by the Half, which goes before;
I mean the Prologue; —and begin
Juſt where you ſee the Stars let in.
Now, if you ſhould again be vext
To find ſo little in my Text;
And Rhymes beneath the Stars ſhould prove
As bad, as thoſe which ſtand above;
As ſometimes happens to my Coſt,
When I perceive th' effects of Froſt;

Too

Too near the Fire my Bottle's fet;
The Spirit's warm'd into a fret;
With fudden Bounce the Cork flies out,
And half the Liquor runs about;
While the Remainder, to my thinking,
Grows thick, and is not worth the drinking.
If this odd Image fill your Head;
And having read me, or unread
You deem my Prologue, and my Tale,
As empty Froth, or muddy Ale;
And here and there, and full and laſs,
I equally offend your Taſte,

To ſtudy the Vices you find between.
For, by all ſages 'tis confeſt,
The Middle often proves the beſt.

To ſhew their Uſe, a noble Name;

And, born long ſince in ancient *Greece*,
May well adorn a modern Piece;
Denote an Author's high Reſpect,
And beſt ſupply a great Defect;
In furious Orators reſtrain
The Over-flowings of the Brain;
Conceal a Poet's Hopes and Fears,
When * *Cynthius* pulls him by the Ears;
Or wiſer ſecond Thoughts infuſe,
When Indignation makes a Muſe.
Here by the way exhort the Bard,
(Whoſe Merit claims a due Regard)
Incited by a gen'rous Rage,
To laſh the Vices of the Age;
To ſcourge the COSCIAS rais'd by Fate
To premier Miniſters of State:

---

* *Cynthius aurem*
Vellit, & admonuit. VIRGIL.

Or, bold to touch an higher String,
And mark the Follies of a King.
(For right or wrong, ſooner or later,
The greateſt Kings are reach'd by Satire:
*As heavenly Bodies ſometimes feel
The cruel Edge of mortal Steel;
And ſpill that precious balmy Liquor:—
In Men 'tis Blood; in Gods 'tis *Ichor*.)
In Caſes ſo extreamly nice,
Give the good Poet ſound Advice:
Bid him attempt no great Deſign,
Till Aſt'risks form a double Line.
They are the Language of the wiſe;
For Nonſenſe they're the beſt diſguiſe;
The ſtrongeſt Guard that can attend him;
The ſureſt Weapons to defend him.

---

* In the fifth Book of the *Iliad*, *Venus* and *Mars* are both wounded by *Diomed*.

From the clear Vein the Stream immortal flow'd,
Such Stream as iſſues from a wounded God, &c. POPE.

This Stream is call'd *Ichor* in the Original.

Arm'd thus, he ſafely may purſue
Corruption in her blackeſt hue;
Or paint her, when ſhe's rob'd in red,
Or with a Mitre on her Head.
And fierce, as Patriots out of Place,
May look Sir —— in the Face;
Defy the Scribes, and all their Clerks;
If thus he publiſh his Remarks.

* * * * * * *
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Obſerve! each Hieroglyphick ſhews
The Means, which wiſer Heads propoſe,
To calm our Feuds, and mend the State;
And brand the Men we're bound to hate.

There's not a Stroke without Deſign:
There's *Attick* Salt in ev'ry Line.
And ſee! if you can ſee ſo far,
Great Names lie under ev'ry Star.
But would you know, what more they mean?
Repair to *Lincoln*: ſee ——
He in Occults is deeper read,
Than *Bacon*, or his Brazen Head.
For ev'ry Daſh he knows a Reaſon,
And in a Dot diſcerns High-Treaſon;
While Clerks, untaught to take a Hint,
Rudely affirm, there's nothing in't.
So, an enlighten'd SCOT eſpies
Old *Satan* in our *Chriſtmas*-Pyes;
While ſouthern Wights, who think no evil,
In Plumbs and Mince-meat eat the Deril.
Thus a long Proem having writ,
And ſpic'd it here and there with Wit;

A Mixture of the Sour and Sweet;
(You know, I ſell it by the Sheet)
Now to my Story I proceed,
Which no Apology can need;
Since, in each Circumſtance exact,
I only tell a ſimple Fact.

When I had lately bid adieu
To ſuch a worthy Friend as you;
* In this bad Seaſon forc'd to Town,
(Where all things ſeem turn'd upſide down;
Where Water's dear, and Fuel's ſcarce,
And where the ----- is a Farce)
To talk with Lawyers, deal with Jews;
And hear black —— expound the News;
And prove, as two and two make four,
So ENGLAND never flouriſh'd more.
My Mind oppreſs'd, and full of Grief,
I thought it might be ſome Relief;

* This Poem was written, during the late Froſt, in *January* 1739-40.

If

If, as I travel'd all alone,
I read a Leſſon in *Petrone*;
A merry Bard of *Phœbus'* Train;
Who, tho' he liv'd in *Nero's* Reign,
The Tyrant's Cruelty defy'd,
* And ſung a Ballad, while he dy'd.
But, as in great Affairs of Life,
To get a Place, or money'd Wife,
When we erect the ſureſt Schemes;
They often end in golden Dreams.
For things below muſt be tranſacted
By Laws, which are above enacted:
And wiſe State-Projects ſhall ſucceed,
Juſt as the Fates have firſt agreed;
This Kingdom riſe; that Empire fall;
As they are pleas'd to turn the Ball.

---

* See TACITUS's Account of the Death of PETRONIUS. L. Annal. 16.

Thus

What if we manage War, as few can,
* Says B--p G--CH, and Poet *Lucan*,
With Strength ſuperior, and with quick-Tricks?
The juſter Cauſe may not be *victrix*.
So, in my Chaiſe, when now I thought
By forty Years Experience taught;
(A ſafer Cure in human Ills,
Than *Bennet*'s Wine, or *Belloſte*'s Pills)
To kill the Time, and eaſe my Pain:
Lo! my Deſign was render'd vain
By an odd Whim Dame Fortune took,
To make me lay aſide my Book.
About a Furlong from your door,
I met a dozen Geeſe or more:
The Sire (I knew his rev'rend Phyz)
Salutes me with a furious hiſs.

---

* VICTRIX *cauſa Deis placuit, ſed Victa Catoni.* Lucan. I am afraid the *Victrix* and the *Victa Cauſa* may ſurprize and puzzle us. B--p G--CH's Faſt-Sermon, pag. 17.

His

His ſilver Wives, vain of their Choice,
Applaud his Courage, and his Voice.
For, as if * *Socrates* had bred him,
Or † *Juno*'s Prieſts in *Rome* had fed him,
To triumph o'er the cruel *Gauls*,
And ‖ ſave *Jove*, and his Capitol,
Fierce was his Mien, yet grave and wiſe:
I ſtop; I view him; with Surprize
I heard him, thus: (I tell no Lie;
For ‡ *Thomas* heard as well as I)
" Art thou become a Man of Rhyme?
" And do'ſt thou think it not a Crime,
" Void of all Humour, Wit and Grace,
" To claim a Welcome to this Place?
" To fill a Sheet with idle Jokes
" On C--, and me, and ſuch good folks?

* *Socrates* entertained a Gooſe, by which he always ſwore.

† In the Year of *Rome* 363, the Capitol had been ſurprized by the *Gauls*, who then beſieged it, if the Soldiers had not been waked by the Gabbling of the Geeſe, who were kept there, and conſecrated to *Juno*.

‖ *Anſeris & tutum voce fuiſſe Jovem.* PROPERT. ‡ The Coachman.

" To make our Squires and Peaſants Sport
" With a dull Satire on the Court;
" Revive ſome Mythologic Fable;
" Suppoſe for Rhyme, *Augeas'* Stable;
" And by a Comment ſhew, what means it?
" Unleſs you ſhew too, who can cleanſe it.
" Or in old *Æſop*'s Manner ſay,
" Or in the honeſt Speech of GAY;
" Where now a ſtupid Lion lies,
" Without the Uſe of Ears or Eyes?
" Unleſs you ſay, what ne'er will be,
" How we can make him hear and ſee.
" For mark me, Poet, if your Tale
" In one eſſential Point ſhould fail;
" If it be found too mild, too ſtrong,
" Too high, too low, too ſhort, too long;

" Or, if the Moral be not true;
" I'll hiſs your Works, as well as you.

" If not ---- may *Clotho*, or that Slut,
" (What is her Name?) that's us'd to cut,
" With her ſharp Sciſſars ſnip my Thread;
" Or ſend the Fox to fetch my Head.
" Or may our * Goody in a Rage,
" Half-drunk with Gin, forget my Age;
" Swear, I am fat and fit to die,
" And doom my Giblets to a Pye.
Then, driving on to † *Potters-Bar*,
I met a Coachman with a Star;
And next a venerable Aſs,
Who ſcrupled long to let me paſs:
At length, compell'd to give the Way,
After a ſhrill tremendous Bray,
From him theſe human Accents broke:
(Aſſes you know have ſometimes ſpoke)

* A drunken old Woman, who looks after the Poultry.
† A Village in *Hertfordſhire*.

" If in your Way a-while I ſtood,
" My Friend, I ſtopt you for your good;
" To change your Manners — If you'll be
" In tickliſh Times advis'd by me.
" Untaught, unpenſion'd, unpolite,
" Do not imagine, you can write;
" And, fond to tell what all Men know,
" Make the illuſtrious Knight your Foe:
" Without his Aid, or *Clio*'s leave,
" Old Morals, and new Verſes weave
" (Bleſs us!) five hundred in a Letter;
" As if the length wou'd make it better:
" Pretend, you have not Skill to fawn,
" And laugh at learned Men in Lawn:
" Impute our national Diſaſters
" To Blunders, Cheats, and Balance-Maſters:
" And, while with Libels you attack us,
" Fancy, you're born to copy *Flaccus*.

* A drunken old Woman, who looks after the Poultry.
† A Village in Hertfordshire.

" For

" For, tho' your Ears are not as wide as
" Thoſe, which *Apollo* hung on *Midas*;
" Your Rhymes, like * * * 's Eſſay,
" Convince me, you are apt to bray.
" As for your Aſt'risks, Daſhes, Blanks—
" Can they deſerve a Reader's Thanks?
" Perhaps they'll make an Ideot laugh;
" Perhaps they'll make your Perſon ſafe:
" But can they, if your Verſe be lame,
" Or ſell your Works, or ſave your Fame?
" Excuſe my Freedom: truſt my Word:
" I give no Counſel, that's abſurd,
" Like other Aſſes: ſince I trace
" My Lineage from a nobler Race,
" Than * *Lucian* boaſts, or *Apuleius*:
" *Brutorum Anima eſt Deus.*

* APULEIUS hath given us the Relation of his own Metamorphoſis, and of all that happened to him under the Figure of an Aſs, 'Tis a witty and inſtructive Story. He borrowed the Plan of it from LUCIAN.

" * *And*

" * *And, tho' my Soul may have a Core;*
" *Be planetary-plaiſter'd o'er;*
" *I'm in Progreſſion to be clean:*
" As you may read in Dr. CHEYNE.
At *Barnet* being oblig'd to call,
I ſtopt juſt by a COBLER's Stall.
When thus the Loon began to joke;
And ever whiſtled, as he ſpoke:
" If ancient things you change to new
" As when a Cobler ſoles a Shoe,
" Whether in Epic, Ode, or Satire;
" You're ſtil'd, as I am, a Tranſlator:
" And, if you hit your Author's Senſe,
" You may be read without Offence:
" But, if you reach his Wit and Spirit,
" You raiſe his Fame, and ſhare his Merit.

* See Dr. CHEYNE's laſt Book, Entitled, *An Eſſay on Regimen*, and what that learned Phyſician hath advanc'd in his philoſophical Diſcourſes concerning the Creation of Spirits, the *Adamical* Core, the *Planetary-plaiſtering* and *Incruſtation* of the Soul, and its *Progreſſion* in order to throw off the *Planetary-plaiſtering*, and to be purified into *Illability* and *Impeccability*.

" When

" When you are therefore next inclin'd
" To praiſe the Friends you've left behind;
" The rural Scenes, the ſweet Abode:
" Borrow a *Greek*, or *Roman* Ode,
" Or would you draw in ſtronger Lines,
" The mighty M——'s Deſigns;
" Deſcribe his Heaps, his magic Mould;
" And how he caſts his Men of Gold;
" His Converts bowing to his Rod,
" And Nobles waiting on his Nod;
" Repeat, what ancient Bards have writ,
" And truſt your Fame to Claſſic Wit?
" But, if old Authors you diſdain,
" Reſolv'd to ſpin from your own Brain;
" Since your Invention may not need 'em;
" Or elſe — becauſe you cannot read 'em:
" Tho' Rhymes preſent, and Fancies flow;
" Ere you begin, conſult MONRO:

" He's

" He's your old Friend, ſincere and free;
" And ſtill attends without a Fee:
" Your Theme, your Patron let him chuſe;
" And the Moon's Age direct your Muſe.

From *Barnet* to St. *Giles*'s Pound,
My Meditations were profound.
The Goose and Ass, I ween, were Fairies,
Fam'd for their Frolicks and Figaries:
Who often change to Birds and Beaſts,
Only to carry on their Jeſts:
Yet in thoſe Forms will ſay ſhrewd things;
And give Advice, that's fit for Kings.
But then--- that Fellow in his Stall ---
How ſhould he go beyond his Awl?
Where did he learn his Obſervations?
To talk ſo juſtly of Tranſlations?
How ſhould he know the Names, the Nature
Of *Greek* and *Roman*, Ode and Satire?

Or--

Either thought I, 'tis all a Trick;
Or elſe the Cobler was old Nick.
Or -- If he might not be the Devil,
Becauſe his counſel was not evil;]
Perhaps, aſſiſting in a Rape,
'Twas *Hermes* in a Cobler's Shape.
Well! now the Chaiſe hath ſet me down
At a ſmall Tavern, call'd the Crown:
Where, by good chance, I met a Sage,
Born to allay poetic rage:
To whom the wonders I rehearſe,
Which I tranſmit you here in verſe;
The Taunts I ſuffer'd by the way,
Thoſe direful Omens of the day;
Propounding all my doubts and fears:
While the old Shaver ſhook his ears.
Then, looking wiſe as *S---n* or *H---ſe*,
He ſearch'd my eyes, he felt my pulſe;

He paus'd a while --- And thus began:

" Believe me, you're a happy man,
" Favour'd with ſuch a premonition:
" A King may envy your condition.
" But ſtill, to make the matter plain,
" Your Viſions let me thus explain.
" A Verſe, that's uncorrect and looſe,
" Will find ſome emblematick *Gooſe*,
" To cenſure, what he thinks amiſs,
" And treat the Author with an hiſs.
" If you attempt in airy Rhymes,
" To pleaſe the Town, and ſuit the Times,
" A merry tale; and prove unable:
" You are the *Aſs* of your own Fable.
" The *Cobler*'s whiſtle, and his Chat
" Are to your purpoſe very pat.
" The Moral of the ſtory fits
" The Man, who lives by others wits.

" As you know who has got a name,
" By building upon *Milton*'s Fame.
" But rightly to apply the whole: ---
" Help nature, and enlarge your Soul.
" Would you, like other Sages, think?
" Freely, like other Sages, drink.
" Would you engage the ſacred Nine?
" Make your Libations firſt in Wine,
" You know, or ſure you ought to know it;
" That *Hare-Court* Pump ne'er made a Poet.
" Tho' ſmooth as *C---ber's* be your Rhyme;
" As *C---s* be your Style ſublime:
" Produc'd by water, no Eſſay
" Shall live a twelve-month and a day.

Here a fair Town-Nymph all alone,
Ask'd at the Bar for number One,
The Charmer's voice my Teacher heard;
Wink'd on me; and then diſappear'd.

But now, to ſhew my College ſenſe,
And draw ſome uſeful Inference ——
The GOOSE, the ASS, and as you ſee,
The COBLER and the SAGE agree.
For, tho' a gentler ſtrain he try'd,
And now explain'd, and then apply'd;
In other words he ſaid no more,
Than what the reſt had ſaid before.

By theſe Inſtructions I am taught
To write, as ev'ry Doctor ought;
With ſerious truths to fill my page,
With ſolid ſenſe inform the age;
To praiſe your happy, country life;
And *ſuch a Husband, ſuch a Wife*;
To prove, that thoſe are truly wiſe,
Who tinſel grandeurs can deſpiſe,
That ſuch, as taſte of Royal grace,
Are not made better by a Place;

That, far above the men of birth,
Above the Scepter'd Sons of Earth,
Stands the great *PATRIOT's bleſſed name,
Illumin'd in the Roll of Fame.

Then, as you're bred in *Plato's* School,
And ſquare your life by Virtue's rule;
And ſince the Gods have form'd your mind,
(So like their own!) to love Mankind;
I'll ask ſome queſtions --- ſuch as theſe ---
(You may reſolve me when you pleaſe.)

Suppoſe, in ſome ill omen'd hour,
A Subject rais'd to ſov'reign pow'r;
Who labours, with unwearied pains,
To bind a Free-born State in chains:

---

* By this Appellation I mean the Man, who is a true Lover of his Country, and will always be ready to ſacrifice his Life and Eſtate in defence of public Liberty. I do *not* mean the Man, who calls himſelf a PATRIOT *now*, in order to be a MINISTER *hereafter*.

Does

Does he not waſte his parts, his health?
Will not his Houſe, his Friends, his Wealth,
Howe'er their fate may be delay'd,
Sink in the ruins he has made?

Suppoſe (you'll ſay, no mortal knows
Such Men; I grant it; but ſuppoſe)
Lords of a grave, majeſtic port,
Blown in the ſun-ſhine of a Court:
Who much poſſeſs, yet covet more;
And gold in ev'ry ſhape adore;
Enjoy the eaſe, and pomp of Life;
The ſolace of a ſober Wife:
Yet, when with ſupp'lant hands addreſs'd,
Turn from a Brother, that's diſtreſs'd;
Will it not ſound prophane and odd,
To call theſe Miniſters of God?

But, if ſuch Themes are too ſublime,
Or, if the queſtions are a crime;

To things, which can't be conſtru'd ill,
I'll try to ſhape the Poet's Quill:
I'll ſhew the feats of Little Love;
Where laſt he ſought his Mother's *Dove;
Or in the Laureat's ſtrains I'll ſing
The Man, who purchas'd* Carvel's Ring:
Wiſely reſolv'd, no more to uſe
The Voice of an Itin'rant Muſe;
Who talks for ever, if you hear her;
And ſeems delighted, when you jeer her.
For doubtleſs 'tis a juſt Decree,
When Friends and Enemies agree;
And ſure the Poet's head is wrong,
When Men and Beaſts deſpiſe the Song.

11' 7 '49

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* Alluding to two of Prior's Tales, The Dove, and Hans Carvel.

FINIS.

Erratum pag. 7. For *Opitician* read *Optician.*

To things, which can't be confess'd ill,
I'll try to shape the Poet's Quill:
I'll shew the feats of Little Love;
Where Jaft he fought his Mother's *Dove;
Or in the Laureat's Arms I'll sing
The Man, who purchas'd* Cæsar's Ring:
Wisely resolv'd, no more to rule
The Voice of an Intrant Mule;
Who talks for ever, if you hear her;
And seems delighted, when you jeer her.
For doubtless 'tis a just Decree,
When Friends and Enemies agree;
And sure the Poet's head is wrong,
When Men and Beasts delight the Song.

---

* Alluding to two of Parrot's Tales, The Dove, and Hans Carvel.

FINIS.

Erratum pag. 7. For Opinion read Opinions